

RESTRUCTURING A MENTORING PROGRAM

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Abstract: In Fall 2009 I became Chair of a Task Force to prepare a new mentoring document based on a review of the 2001 program at the USC Libraries and to make recommendations for a restructuring of the program. The Task Force also included an evaluation of the program, not of the mentor-mentees relationship, but of the program itself and whether it was meeting the goals of the broader University program and needs of the mentor pairs. This matched with a push within the University to increase and improve mentoring across the entire faculty. The presentation will discuss the University's mentoring setting, the USC Libraries' original 2001 program, and the new program that has resulted from the review.

Keywords: mentoring, mentors, mentoring in education, program evaluation.

What is mentoring? Is it the relationship between supervisor and the person being supervised, between Head of the Library and her/his favorite employee, between colleagues, or some combination of these and other relationships? Need it be formally assigned, can it be found by accident, or does a person need to seek one out?

The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines a mentor as “an experienced and trusted adviser” and adds as a special usage, “an experienced person in a company, college, or school who trains and counsels new employees or students.” Both of these definitions were applied in different stages and editions of the University of Southern California (USC) Libraries Mentoring Program. How does mentoring differ from coaching? A brief but easy to distinguish definition was given at an “Coaching and Mentoring Federal Librarians,” program at the SLA Annual Conference in New Orleans in June 2010: “Mentoring and coaching can be very different behaviors although we often use the words interchangeably. Mentors are strategic and coaches are tactical. Mentors are looking at your entire life or larger chunks of it, while coaches may be looking more short term.” The idea that mentors look at the broader career is not limited just to federal librarians, but is equally applicable in other settings. The broader view of mentoring over coaching is implicit, but not explicit in the USC Mentoring Program.

In Fall 2009 I became Chair of a Task Force to review the USC Libraries 2001 mentoring program documents and to make recommendations for a restructuring of the program. This review also included an evaluation of the program, not of the relationship of the mentor and the person being mentored, but of the program itself and whether it was meeting the goals of the Libraries and the broader University and the needs of the mentor pairings.

This must start with background on USC's interest in mentoring, then will continue with the features of the Libraries' original formal mentoring program. USC, as probably all universities, is involved in mentoring. I was not fully aware of the breadth of types of mentoring recognized at USC until most of the mentoring documents had been reviewed. There are formal peer mentoring programs for students, which includes those within student organizations, basically trying to match students of similar interests with one being further along in their education. A special program called I AM (Increasing Access via Mentoring) matches USC students to High School students in the area near the two campuses to keep High School students on target toward their diplomas. By now nearly all departments, and certainly all schools at USC, have programs for faculty mentoring to students, both graduate students (usually their senior professor) and undergraduate students (generally within the major). Finally, there are programs for alumni to mentor to students. This is especially useful when students seek out internships as the alumni are well linked in the area to know where potential internships might be. The latter is part of what USC calls the "Trojan Family." It is something I did not believe in when I came to USC over twenty years ago, but I have been convinced it is real. With the inauguration of USC's eleventh President, he has made it very clear that all academic units are to be aware of, encourage, and preferably have an identified program for mentoring throughout the university. Faculty to faculty mentoring is usually from senior to junior faculty and is often aimed at getting junior faculty over the tenure hurdle. This is similar to a feature of the Libraries program in getting librarians over a similar hurdle, as will be discussed later. There is also mentoring with non tenure track faculty. As mentioned before, faculty also mentor to students on all levels. There is some reverse mentoring, of course, as faculty who have come to the University more recently may have a different point of view and can help more established faculty expand their approaches to teaching or research. In addition, good faculty obviously learn from their students, as well.

The University feels this activity is important enough that they provide support for mentoring. The primary responsibility for this falls to the Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET). CET started in 1996 and the first Director was a librarian. She returned to the library faculty about two years ago and the second Director is an Earth Scientist. The programs of CET include training graduate students in good teaching techniques, how to develop a CV, and other topics in preparing for an academic career. There are also Faculty Fellows who are exemplars of teaching who share their knowledge with faculty and students alike through programs and presentations sponsored by CET. In the area of mentoring CET has pulled together a lengthy list of resources on mentoring, having a mentoring program, what it means to be a good mentor, etc. In 2003 the University received a Mellon Foundation Grant to foster the development of new and innovative ways of mentoring to set a foundation for a university-wide culture of academic mentoring. This grant is administered by CET. In 2006 the Center added Teaching Assistant (TA) Fellows and Undergraduate Fellows to help others succeed (TA to TA and undergraduate to undergraduate). All three groups of Fellows advise the CET in improving their offerings even more. There is a separate and somewhat newer Center for Excellence in Research that also has Faculty Fellows and includes programming on research, research funding sources, etc.

In addition to the programming and support documents on mentoring, there are USC Mellon Mentoring Awards funded by the grant. There are four types of awards: Faculty mentoring Faculty, Faculty mentoring Graduate Students, Faculty mentoring Undergraduates, and the Culture of Mentoring award is given to a School or Department. There were over 400 nominees in 2010, more than twice as many as 2009, so the recognition of mentoring is growing on the campus. The Culture of Mentoring is an area where the new President would like to have more nominees.

Where do the Libraries and their program fit with the definitions above and the context of the university recognizing mentoring as important? The first official formal program in the Libraries began in 2001, prior to the receipt of the Mellon grant funds. The program did not exclude Law and Health Sciences libraries as they were under a separate administrative structure. The language matched the University Libraries' administration at that time. The purpose was "to assist all new Library Faculty colleagues in successfully orienting them to the University Libraries, to the Information Services Division, and to the larger campus and community of the University. The Program should help contribute to new Library Faculty achieving the best opportunities for success in the performance of their position responsibilities and in making valuable contributions to the profession...a particular emphasis...is on providing advice and assistance toward the goal of gaining Continuing Appointment." Continuing Appointment (CA) is the Libraries equivalent status to tenure. All probationary status library faculty were to be assigned mentors. Mentors were assigned by the Associate Dean, Faculty Affairs. The original document also included responsibilities in mentoring by other individuals and groups, e.g. review committees, the individual's reviewing officer (direct report), and the Dean. You can see the focus on CA, but no one looked at mentoring as important in assessments. Most people did not even mention it in self reviews.

Good features	Needs improvement
Included all new librarians	Focus on orientation
Broad involvement in the program design	Contract faculty
Assignments outside the reporting line	No recognition of activity
Ability to change pairing by either participant	No oversight, especially when there were changes in assignment
	No evaluation of the program

Table 1. Features of the 2001 Program.

What did the program do well? It included all the probationary librarians, had involvement beyond just the reviewing officer and the mentor pair, the original matching was outside the reporting line, and either part of the pair could request a change, e.g. the mentor went on sabbatical, the person being mentored felt they could benefit from an additional point of view, etc.

Then what was wrong? The focus on orientation meant the partnership had no direction after the first few months. Often individuals left the University prior to achieving CA for other positions, because they felt a heavy research institution was not for them, they felt underappreciated, all views I personally heard from departing librarians over time. In 2001, three of the seven members of the elected Executive Council of the Library Faculty left for other opportunities prior to achieving CA. Why wasn't the program more successful, or was it completely unsuccessful? One important factor was the library administration had created a contract librarian category in 1999, who were ineligible for CA and soon after the mentoring document was approved in 2001 the new hires were exclusively contract faculty, who were then not covered sufficiently by the mentoring document. They often were not assigned mentors at all.

In fall 2008 a New Faculty Orientation document was prepared, which outlined the basic introduction that would be given to new library faculty. This would indicate that even though there was a strong focus on orientation in the 2001 Mentoring Document, the orientation was not being done sufficiently. Most responsibilities in the Orientation document were assigned to the Reviewing Officer, i.e., the person to whom the new librarian directly reported. There was also mention of a temporary six-month mentor. These temporary mentors were not being assigned, so this was not an issue for the Mentoring Task Force (MTF).

A new Dean and a reorganization of the USC Libraries meant a review of official documents to make corrections for changes in administrative language. In spring 2009 the group revising documents on the intranet for language made it to the 2001 Mentoring Document to revise it to reflect the administrative structure changes. No other changes were made to the document. In the summer the President of the Library Faculty Council (formerly Executive Council) for 2009-2010 asked me to chair a Task Force to review the relevant documents and then update the mentoring documents. Mentoring was a strong interest of hers and she felt the program could be better. Since mentoring is something I also feel is important, I agreed to chair and in early fall she invited three other experienced librarians, two of whom agreed to serve. Both of them have previously served as President of the Council, so there was good experience to apply to the process. Our first responsibility was to review all the documents and we decided we also needed to review other mentoring programs for ideas and to consider ways to strengthen the USC Libraries program.

One member of the MTF took the lead in reviewing other mentoring programs with a focus on academic library programs. He shared the best sites with us and we found some good ideas from these programs. The other member reviewed documents on the Libraries' intranet to identify all related documents so referrals would be accurate and we could keep the documents aligned. I was the primary liaison with administration. One of the problems I identified early on was the fact that the number of people used as mentors was limited and the list on the intranet was outdated. No one was paying attention to changes in administrative structure which required a change in mentor matches. The mentor was specifically defined as being outside the reporting structure, but this was not being adhered to consistently. When the MTF began its work the official list included twelve people being mentored by only nine mentors. One person had left the University

but was still on the list; one had already achieved CA; one mentor had three people assigned and another had two. I worked with the Associate Dean, Faculty Affairs, (AD) to expand the list of mentors. The current list includes eighteen people matched with sixteen mentors and no mentor has more than two assigned, so an improvement.

The primary goal of the 2001 document was to orient and to help mentor a librarian through CA, but we had so many contract librarians who were not on the CA track that we needed to consider what the mentoring goal was for them. To help us with these questions we scheduled meetings in November 2009 with the group that were currently serving as mentors and the current group being mentored. After reviewing other programs, we felt we could ask better questions of the two groups. The meetings were separate to minimize anyone feeling that comments were aimed at any individual and we kept the comments confidential within the meeting/MTF. We also accepted input by email from people who had a time conflict with the scheduled meetings. We wanted input, not on the specific match that they had, but on suggestions to improve the program as a whole. Any evaluation would be of the *program*, not of the individuals involved.

One message that came through strongly from both sides of the pairings was that mentoring was very important to them. Secondly, they stressed the importance of informal mentoring. They also appreciated the fact that the mentors were out of the chain of command (direct review process).

Meanwhile, the three of us on the MTF split up the existing document so we each had a primary area to review. Then we exchanged our suggested revisions and met to consolidate the style of the documents. One of the sections in the old document stated that the Associate Dean was to assign mentors. We wanted to move that responsibility to the Personnel Steering Committee (PSC), an elected oversight-type committee that we felt would provide a broader view in assigning mentors. I discussed this with the PSC chair and she felt this would be appropriate, possibly more efficient, and certainly would broaden the mentor list. There were three interim drafts in October and November, the combined draft was presented to the Council in December and their revisions were incorporated so the MTF and the Council could discuss the document with the Dean at the Council's monthly meeting with her in December.

The Dean did not like our change from AD to PSC; she felt the document was too long, was repetitive, and that some items could be supplementary, not in the Program document itself. The 2001 Mentoring Document included the program and a mentoring calendar structure and was a total of five pages. The Dean preferred only two pages, so the first break off was the calendar. This led to additional rounds of revisions by the MTF during December and January and we began to work on the supplementary documents. Supplementary documents do not need to go through the same review as the primary one. One of these supplements was a document that gave suggestions to the mentors on good procedures, e.g. recommendations on types and frequency of contacts. The new Faculty Council took office the end of May 2010 and got the revised documents in June. I serve as President of the 2010-2011 Council. Due to other issues under consideration, and the need to get the new members of the Council up to speed over the summer, the revised Mentoring Documents were discussed by the Council in early August. Minor revisions

were made. The AD was included in the meeting with the Dean and Council at their mid-August meeting. The final document was approved by all in August and was posted to the intranet, along with the first of the supplementary documents.

Mentors	APCAT
New Librarians	Dean
Associate Dean Faculty Affairs	Reviewing Officer
Personnel Steering Committee (PSC)	Indirect Reviewing Officer
Peer Review Panel	Search Committee Chair

Table 2. Mentoring Program participants 2010.

The chart lists the participants in the current mentoring document. As can be seen, this is not a responsibility of one person or group but of many. Based on the other programs examined and on our own experience a successful program needs the input of all of these – and others. The Indirect Reviewing Officer and the Search Committee Chair were added by the MTF, although the latter is only involved in helping select the original match. The Indirect Reviewing Officer covers any position between the Reviewing Officer and the Dean. The Reviewing Officer's role is closer to the coaching definition given earlier, as it tends to be short term and more task oriented, such as focus on projects of the current review year. The MTF also believes that just because a formal mentor is assigned, this does not preclude informal mentoring relationships. Mentors outside of the library are also very important. These include subject-based faculty and members of professional organizations to which a librarian belongs.

Much of the program structure did not change other than clearer definitions of all participants and strengthening the consultation role of the PSC, and the review process did make people more aware of the program. One thing that was important to retain from the earlier program was that either participant could request a change, as was noted earlier. To my knowledge none have availed themselves of this option; they just quit meeting rather than bother to ask for a change. They then turn more to informal mentoring.

The Dean would like to have mentoring to the highest rank, but since we only have two people at that rank and one of them is her, we really do not have enough mentors to go around. This will need to be revisited at some future date.

How is the current program working? Most of the pairings meet/communicate more frequently at the beginning of the new librarian's time at USC and tend to move to be more collegial than mentor, i.e., more like meetings of equals later on.

Is it different? As new librarians join the faculty, both CA and contract are assigned a mentor. The number of library faculty with long term contracts is diminishing in favor of project based contracts that have a defined end, considered a plus for us all. The emphasis on assigning mentors not in the direct administrative line is breaking down some silos and this is also seen as a good thing. The assigning of mentors as a whole has been more

efficient and the variety of mentors has increased, as noted before. This was not really a change, just a recognition of the importance of doing it. The PSC has taken on the role of reminding the AD, as well as monitoring when there are administrative reassignments to make sure that pairings are still outside the reporting line.

What about program assessment? The relationships on the whole appear to be working smoothly, although the formal assessment has not yet occurred. As MTF Chair I nudged the PSC and the AD to remind them about their roles in the process. Many of the pairings should be assessing the program soon. Assessment of the program itself is, for now, still subjective.

Informal mentoring is very active. Librarians seem to be more comfortable in checking in with anyone who can help them. This includes the more senior of us consulting with the newer librarians. Reverse mentoring occurred before, but is more obviously frequent. Because of increased awareness of the importance of mentoring at the university as a whole, people are beginning to include mentoring in materials gathered for annual reviews or evaluations.

Is mentoring effective? At USC it is considered to be very important, and based on the number of people who discover that a large research institution is not the place for them prior to going forward for tenure, or Continuing Appointment, that should not be considered a negative. The library faculty who remain are very successful in achieving the goal of Continuing Appointment.

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